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# Glossary

**Acid Rain:** Rain or snow that has a lower pH level than is naturally found in a particular area.

**Aquifer:** An underground geological formation, or group of formations, containing usable amounts of ground water that can supply wells and springs.

**Attainment Area:** A geographic area in which levels of a criteria pollutant meet the health-based National Ambient Air Quality Standard.

**Bight:** A bay formed by a curve in the coast.

**Bioaccumulants:** Substances that increase in concentration in living organisms as they take in contaminated air, water, or food because the substances are very slowly metabolized or excreted.

**Bioluminescence:** Production of light by living organisms.

**Brownfields:** Abandoned, idled, or under-used industrial and commercial facilities where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived environmental contamination.

**Carbon Monoxide:** A colorless, odorless, poisonous gas produced by incomplete fossil fuel combustion.

**Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs):** A family of inert, nontoxic, and easily liquefied chemicals used in refrigeration, air conditioning, packaging, and insulation, or as solvents and aerosol propellants. Because CFCs are not destroyed in the lower atmosphere they drift into the upper atmosphere where their chlorine components destroy stratospheric ozone.

**Combined Sewer:** A sewer system that carries both sewage and stormwater runoff. Normally, its entire flow goes to a waste treatment plant, but during a heavy storm, the stormwater volume may be so great as to cause overflows. When this happens, untreated mixtures of stormwater and sewage may flow into surface waters. Stormwater runoff may also carry toxic chemicals from industrial areas or streets into sewer systems.

**Criteria Air Pollutants:** Common air pollutants regulated by EPA on the basis of health-based and/or environmental criteria. Criteria pollutants are widely distributed throughout the United States.

**Desalination:** Removing salt from ocean or brackish water for drinking water purposes.

**Dissolved Oxygen:** The oxygen freely available in water. Dissolved Oxygen is vital to fish and other aquatic life and for the prevention of odors.

**Ecosystem:** The interacting system of a biological community and its non-living environmental surroundings.

**Environmental Justice:** The fair treatment of people of all races, cultures and incomes with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies. Fair treatment implies that no population should bear a disproportionate burden of health consequences due to the siting of pollution sources in their community.

**Estuary:** Regions of interaction between rivers and ocean waters, where fresh and salt waters mix (e.g., bays, salt marshes, lagoons, mouths of rivers).

**Floatables:** Trash floating in coastal waters and bays or washed up on beaches.

**Ground Water:** The supply of fresh water found below the Earth's surface and which is often used for supplying drinking water.

**Hazardous Waste:** By-product of society that can pose a substantial or potential hazard to human health or the environment when improperly managed. Possesses at least one of four characteristics (ignitability, corrosivity, reactivity, toxicity), or appears on special EPA lists.

**Invertebrates:** Lacking a backbone.

**Mangrove:** Tropical trees (genus: *Rhizophora*) that grow in salt water along coastlines and are easily recognizable from their root structure that appears above the water surface.

**Non-attainment:** Geographic area which does not meet one or more of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for the criteria pollutants designated in the Clean Air Act.

**Non-point Source:** Pollution sources that are diffuse and do not have a single point of origin. The pollutants (e.g., litter, grease, oil, fertilizer, pesticides, pet waste, air pollutants from car exhaust) are generally carried off the land by stormwater runoff.

**Ozone:** 1) Stratospheric Ozone ("good ozone"): In the stratosphere (the atmospheric layer beginning 7 to 10 miles above the earth), ozone is a form of oxygen found naturally which provides a protective layer shielding the earth from ultraviolet radiation's harmful effects on humans and the environment. 2) Ground Level Ozone ("bad ozone"): Ozone produced near the earth's surface through complex chemical reactions of nitrogen oxides, hydrocarbons, and sunlight. Ground level ozone is the primary component of smog and is harmful to humans and the environment.

**Particulate Matter:** Fine liquid or solid particles such as dust, smoke, mist, fumes, or smog, found in air or emissions.

**Point Source:** Any single identifiable source of pollution (e.g., a sewage treatment plant, factory smokestack, a pipe, a ditch, a ship).

**Pollution Prevention:** The reduction or prevention of pollution at the source by any practice which reduces the amount of any hazardous substance, pollutant or contaminant entering any waste stream or otherwise released into the environment prior to recycling, treatment or disposal; and which reduces the hazards to public health and the environment associated with the release of such substances, pollutants or contaminants.

**Potable Water:** Water that is safe for drinking and cooking.

**Radon:** A colorless, naturally occurring, radioactive, inert gaseous element formed by radioactive decay of radium atoms in soil or rocks.

**Runoff:** Any rainwater or other liquid that drains over land into a waterway. Like a snowball collects snow and dirt as it rolls down a hill, runoff collects pollutants as it runs over land and carries them to waterways.

**Solid Waste:** Garbage produced in households, commercial establishments, institutions, and businesses. Includes items such as paper, packaging, food scraps, yard trimmings, cans, bottles, and tires. Does not include sewage sludge, industrial process wastes, agricultural wastes, and mining wastes.

**State:** (In EPA Region 2): New York, New Jersey, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the United States Virgin Islands.

**Stormwater:** Rainwater or runoff. Stormwater flows into underground sewers that carry the water to a sewage treatment plant or to a waterway (e.g. river, stream). Stormwater runoff may carry toxic chemicals from industrial areas or streets into sewer systems.

**Superfund:** The program that funds and carries out the EPA solid waste emergency and long-term removal and remedial activities. These activities include establishing the National Priority List, investigating sites for inclusion on the list, determining their priority level on the list, and conducting and/or supervising the cleanup and other remedial actions.

**Surface Water:** All water naturally open to the atmosphere (e.g., lakes, rivers, reservoirs, streams, seas, estuaries); also refers to springs, wells, or other collectors which are directly influenced by surface water.

**Terrestrial:** Living or growing on land.

**Vertebrates:** Organisms with backbones.

**Wastewater:** The spent or used water from an industry, individual home, a community, or a farm that contains dissolved or suspended matter.

**Watershed:** The land area that drains into a particular waterway.

**Wetland:** An area that is regularly saturated by surface or ground water and subsequently is characterized by a prevalence of vegetation that is adapted for life in saturated soil conditions (e.g., swamps, bogs, marshes, mangroves, estuaries).



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